

“THE LEGAL BRIEF”

Advice to the Guardians of the Great Lakes



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DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS AND WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Do you use dietary supplements to increase the effectiveness of workouts, help with weight loss, or simply to increase overall health? If so, you need to be aware of the ingredients in those supplements before taking them. Many of these products are made without much oversight or regulation and may contain substances that can cause you to "pop positive" on a drug test. In addition, use of any substance with the intent to alter mood or function (get high) is prohibited. This newsletter is prompted by the fact that some Coast Guard personnel have learned the hard way that failure to properly research what they are putting in their body, no matter where it is sold, can lead to failed drug test and disciplinary action.

The Coast Guard has adopted policies banning controlled substances in non-prescribed situations as well as certain non-controlled substances. You might think that looking at a list of banned substances is simple; however, it can be very difficult to determine which products contain what substances. The supplement industry is only lightly regulated, and many substances come from overseas where there is even less regulation. This "Legal Brief" is not a substitute for guidance from a medical professional. It is imperative that you consult with a medical professional (e.g. your unit Health Services Technician or Coast Guard Medical Officer), if you have any questions.

Performance Enhancers and Weight Loss Products: Dietary supplements are a common way to get vitamins and minerals when they are not consumed in sufficient quantities in your diet. However, these supplements are not tested by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). If a substance, like ephedra, has been proven harmful, the FDA can ban the substance. Coast Guard members are prohibited from using anything on this banned list; however, it only comprises a portion of substances members are prohibited from consuming. Many other products may be sold and marketed for weight loss or performance enhancing capabilities, but contain substances that members are prohibited from taking or have potentially dangerous side effects.

Muscle Building Products: Due to the physical demands of the job, many Coast Guard members use supplements for muscle building to complement their workout. Along with banned substances on the FDA's banned list, the Coast Guard also uses the NCAA's list of banned products, as well. While not all substances on the NCAA's list are banned by the Coast Guard (like caffeine), you should exercise caution taking any substance on the list. Common products like creatine and whey protein are allowed by Coast Guard policies, however, ingredient lists should always be checked to determine if any substances in the supplement are banned.

Recreational Drugs: The Drug Enforcement Agency regulates drugs as controlled substances. Some of these drugs are illegal, while others are regulated as to how they are sold, bought, and used. However, there are substances that are not controlled substances which mimic the effect of being "high" that controlled substances provide. These controlled substance analogues include "spice", bath salts, and many more. The Coast Guard has also prohibited the use of any intoxicating substance, other than alcohol and tobacco, that is used to alter mood or function. Prescription medications are controlled substances, and may only be used with a prescription, and according to the directions on the prescription.

Resources: Know what you are taking!

For more information on dietary supplements check out the following websites:

-DoD Human Performance Resource Center: <http://hprc-online.org/dietary-supplements/opss/operation-supplement-safety-OPSS/high-risk-supplement-list>

-NCAA Banned Substance List: <http://www.ncaa.org/2016-17-ncaa-banned-drugs>

-The World Anti-Doping Agency List: <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/media/news/2015-09/wada-publishes-2016-prohibited-list>.